



# *COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA*

*DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL RETARDATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES*

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## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Meeting Held to Prepare for Psychological Impact of Future Terrorist Attacks**

**Northern Virginia**—Members of the Community Resilience Project of Northern Virginia recently met in New York with the other five crisis counseling projects from Washington, D.C., New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, established after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to discuss lessons learned, including ways to ensure that crisis counseling efforts are activated with other first responders after a disaster and how to initiate efforts to prepare Americans for the psychological impact of potential future incidents.

“We are told about the continued threats of terrorist attacks and the potential for going to war, however, we have not been armed with information about how to cope with these threats, and what to tell our children,” said Congressman Jim Moran of Virginia, who has supported the Community Resilience Project since its inception. “One of our greatest weaknesses is that we are not prepared for the psychological impact of terrorism, and yet, terrorism is psychological warfare. One of the intended consequences of terrorism is fear. It is critical that we prepare for the psychological impact as well as the physical, and that we are in a position to activate crisis counselors immediately after a disaster to ensure that people get the help they need.”

In a 3-day meeting, crisis counseling staff discussed what made reactions, coping strategies, and outreach for people affected by 9/11 different from natural disasters. They shared information about what they learned, what was and was not effective, what should be done differently next time, and ways to document this information so crisis counseling efforts will have a head start should another terrorist attack occur. The major concern discussed is that the lack of disaster mental health infrastructure resources continues to prevent each state from preparing for future terrorist attacks.

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The crisis counseling services are provided at no cost to people who work or live in one of the six states: Virginia, Washington, D.C., New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Crisis counseling programs are often established after a Federal disaster has been declared, as was the case after 9/11, to help people cope and recover. These programs are administered by state and local governments and are funded through disaster grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

If you live or work in the counties of Arlington, Fairfax/Falls Church, Loudoun, or the city of Alexandria, and you or someone you love needs help with reactions to 9/11, call the Community Resilience Project of Northern Virginia toll free at 1-866-400-2951 (TTY: 703-228-4831) or visit [www.communityresilience.com](http://www.communityresilience.com).

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